

## **Second Thoughts**

### **The Path Up the Hill**

By JANE BRADLEY

I am a trustee of the Duxbury Free Library because of a playground.

Back in the 1980s, a group of mothers was trying to find a site for a public playground, where preschool children (and their parents) could gather. This cause appealed to me: I had 4-year-old twins and a toddler, and I still felt new-to-town after 2 years.

One site was next to the library on St. George St., but the library demurred. It was crowded enough without an influx of even more inoms and children, we were told.

"What's wrong with the library if it doesn't want children streaming through its doors?" I wondered.

So when I read there was a opening for Library Trustee, I went for it. At the time, I knew nothing about Duxbury politics. Nevertheless, I was elected a Library Trustee in 1987, and I have been one ever since.

At my first trustees' meeting, I naively presented an ambitious plan for a "Kids Culture Club." As I passed around information I'd gathered on performing artists in New England, I could feel my cheeks flame and my voice grow high-pitched.

"There just isn't any money for something like this," I was told gently.

In time, I learned the ropes. I learned about budget restraints, balance of power, the push and pull of wanting improvements and needing to hold down taxes.

Across town near Chandler School, the preschool playground sprang to life, but the library grew ever more cramped each day.

Things were going to have to change, and to make a long story short, they did: this Sunday the Duxbury Free

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Library will open its doors on a new home in the 1927 Duxbury High School, also known as the Alden School. Overall the library's size will triple, while the children's area will quadruple.

Like the toddler playground effort, the long push for a bigger, better library was led by a volunteer brigade of citizens committed to a cause. Especially in the beginning, there was opposition. Sometimes it was ugly.

This brought the supporters closer to each other and made them even more determined. Armed with double-checked facts, a crowded agenda of neighborhood coffees and committee hearings, this homegrown campaign was waged both in kitchens and in Town Hall.

By the time the signal tally was counted at Town Meeting in 1995, 746 Duxbury citizens were calling for a new library.

In a twinkling, they made history.

Architects were sent to the drawing board for final documents. Construction bids were prepared. Government grant money was awarded. Municipal bonds were assured. Private fundraising took off.

After 10 years, this is what I have learned from my foray into civic action: when townspeople speak in a clear, unified voice in place like Duxbury, the earth will move.

I've learned this too: the sound of that clear voice gives you a shiver that could crack the Liberty Bell all over again.

Sunday, Nov. 23, the new library will be dedicated, and on Monday, Nov. 24, it will open for business from its commanding site overlooking Train Field.

You should be there.

Inside the historic brick walls and wide windows is just about everything you could ask for in a community library.

And right next to the library, I'm delighted to report, is a playground.